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*International Forum*  
*Vol. 23, No. 2*  
*December 2020*  
*pp. 22-39*

**FEATURE**

**The Reality of Philippine Education:  
A Photovoice Participatory  
Action Research**

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*Abstract. Colonialism impacted the development of Philippine education for the Philippines was ruled by foreigners for quite a long time. The government tries to improve the quality of education. Using photovoice participatory action research and Friere's ideology (Friere, 1970), this study aimed to narrate the stories of 10 public school teachers of Southcentral, the Philippines, on their views, life experiences, and hopes for quality education. To determine the current realities of Philippine education through the use of the camera, participants tell stories using photographs. Writing down stories through themes, explaining photos using the SHOWed framework (Wallerstein, 1987), and conducting exhibits were employed in interpreting and evaluating data. The themes that emerged from the data included uncertainty, the season of change, sweet toil, headway, and the promise. The results showed that the teachers found Philippine education as obfuscate and faceless. They describe their teaching experiences as a battle and survival but leaving a legacy and being positive for the future are their aspirations for quality education.*

**Keywords:** Philippine education, photovoice, participatory action research, Southcentral Philippines.

**Introduction**

The Philippines is an extraordinary country. Lying north of Indonesia, in 2016, it was ranked twelfth in the world for its population size of over 110 million (Macha, Mackie, & Magaziner, 2018; Philippine Population, 2020). Like much of Southeast Asia, the Philippines was colonized by several colonial powers, including Spain and America (Herrera, 2015), and these colonizers have left their impression on the Filipino educational system. Their impact can be seen in Filipino education to date (Plaza, 2018).

Despite the country's long political independence from colonial powers, the Filipino education system continues to be tied to foreign orientations and objectives (7 Key Issues and Problems of Philippine Education, 2017).

The educational structure largely depends on the quality of the political system. It is used to identify national identity and economic development assessment (Lall & Vickers, 2008). One example is the politics of patronage, which is practiced by some Philippine politicians and some educational administrators in the country (Politics of Patronage in the Philippine Educational System, n.d). Educational development is slow because not all Filipinos have taken educational concerns seriously. They find education as a gateway of opportunity, the absence of passion in teaching for some teachers, and the scarcity of teachers teaching in the remote areas are still observed until today (Stating the Obvious: The State of the Philippine Education, 2010).

Studies have shown that several public schools in the Philippines have failed to deliver quality education because of teacher's lack of commitment, poor learning facilities, and inadequate learning instructions resulting in the poor performance of students (Orale & Quejada, 2018). Only a few Filipino students from elementary and secondary level can qualify the least international standard in Mathematics (Samer, 2016). Other contributing factors why the current Philippine education system becomes less effective were excessive administrative and non-teaching workloads, promotions of academically challenged students to the next grade level, and lack of guidance counselors (Kritz, 2019). On the contrary, despite the many challenges experienced by Philippine education, it cannot be denied that Filipinos are the most fluent English speakers among its neighbors in Asian countries, and these could greatly contribute to the Philippine economic growth (Plaza, 2018).

From the general point of view, Philippine education is continually competing with the educational standards in the global arena. Though it cannot be denied that there are lots of programs and policies implemented by the government (EFA, 2015) such as primary education enhancement (Rep. Act 10533), Philippine education reformation (Barlongo, 2015), and transformation of human resources to global citizens (Fleet & Winthrop, 2010), the Philippine education system is still affected by the issues aligned to political corruption, abusive use of power, and cultural mentality (Cabrera, 2015). Eventually, education stakeholders have exerted collaborative efforts for financial support, curriculum development, research, and extensions to address all educational issues and concerns.

Specifically, little is known about the lived experiences of Filipino public school teachers and their hopes for quality education, especially using photovoice as a research method. This study is significant because the information to be shared is the first-hand experience of the mentors who facilitate the Philippine educational process. The findings of this study may also serve as indicators for policy change and educational development.

## **Review of the Literature**

Education is one of the main reasons for all development happening in one's environment (Idris, Hassan, Ya'acob, Gill, & Awal, 2016). It helps defeat poverty and maintains health; it makes one productive, improves the economy, and provides people a better quality of life (Giovetti, 2020). In the Philippines, the education system is affected by colonialism, one of the reasons why the country is less productive in producing research and innovators than its Asian neighbors. Nevertheless, the government is continually exerting effort to improve the Philippines' quality of education (Plaza, 2018).

## **Views on Philippine Education**

If a particular country's educational system is influenced mainly by its governmental structure, its development depends on the quality of its legislative management. In the Philippines, the political approach is part of the educational system; more than two thousand years ago, education played an important role in the field of political thought. Easton, (n.d). It is still observable here in the Philippines the "Partisan approach" in hiring job applicants, where people in the lower ranks are less favored than those in the opposite (Hays, 2015) unlike in Australia, where there is a strong and widely accepted belief that education and politics at least should be separated (Harman, 1970). This educational problem is common in Asia, where education served as a political tool in defining national identity. Therefore, it is seen that the quality of education largely depends on the quality of its political system (Lall & Vickers, 2008).

Orata (2016) revealed in his article that educational institutions in the Philippines are under the supervision and regulation of the state. The country is responsible for the progression of its institutions (Republic Act No. 9155). Studies have shown that the Philippine education system needs to have a responsive curriculum, acknowledge the role of education in national development, and actively embrace the globalization of education (Durban & Catalan, 2012). One of the good educational reformations made by the government is the implementation of the k-12 program in the Philippines. Through this program, the Philippine education system is now aligned to the global standard of education where the employability status of many Filipinos and institutional accessibility of students, local or international, will not anymore be an issue (Okabe, 2013).

## **Teaching Experiences in School**

Teaching is a profession that touches the hearts and minds of children. Every child's dream lies in the hand of a teacher. Thus, competence should complement the satisfaction and comfort of a teacher.

The teachers' responsibility to provide quality education to students is still a high demand from society. To meet the standard for quality education, teachers

should continually uphold their teaching competence by upgrading their knowledge, skills, and curriculum instruction (Solheim, 2017). Studies revealed that when teachers are competent in their field, the students exhibit better school performance (Freiberg et al., 1995; Omoteso & Samudara, 2011), and learners show active participation in any classroom instructions (Kunter et al., as cited in Solheim, 2017). Generally, those who passed the licensure examination for teachers (LET) are assured competent in their field of expertise (Acosta & Acosta, 2016).

However, teachers are human; their efficiency in teaching is sometimes affected by negative factors such as pressures, unfriendly environments, and others. According to Juszczak (2014), people who work in this profession are threatened with burnout syndrome. The study of Ye (2016) emphasized that the working environment significantly affects the teacher's performance. Also, the unsustainable workload is the other reason why teachers leave school (Torres, 2014).

In developing countries like the Philippines, several educators significantly experience burnout syndrome, pressures, and an unfriendly environment. Based on the study conducted by Nemenzo (2018), the teachers, especially those coming from public schools, experienced a very great extent of the problem on the Information Communication Technology (ICT) in school, large class size, lack of parents' support, bullying, students' absenteeism disobeying classroom and school policies and others. These have brought them to get a satisfactory performance rating, which is below the expected standard of teaching performance as very competent or outstanding. Besides, Lartic et al. (2014) emphasized that teachers found difficulties in teaching in the Mother-Tongue Based Language Education (MTBLE) curriculum or teaching majority/local dialect because it lacks learning materials and language incompetence. Thus, the reason why teachers' quality of teaching performance affects classroom management and the quality of education.

### **Hopes for Quality Education**

John Dewey (as cited in Zulueta & Maglaya, 2012) once said, "Education is not a preparation for life, but education is life itself" (p. 100). Education causes an individual's mind, character, and physical activities properly attuned. The proper delivery of education influences the standard of living (Quality of Life Indicators-Education, 2019). The Education for All (EFA) program is continually developing its learning accessibility to formally realize that no child will be left behind in terms of acquiring an education (Barret, 2011).

Since education formally affects the living condition of the people, the EFA initiated new strategies to successfully attain its goal that someday all children in the world are equipped with proper and standard education. Like any other country, the Philippines is also continually working to improve the quality of its education. Public and private institutions are joining efforts for the development of the educational system (Ateneo de Manila University, 2012). For example, there was a program that was focused on restructuring the Philippines' primary educational system through *December 2020, Vol. 23, No. 2*

the K to 12 (Barlongo, 2015). Another initiative was undertaken by the government appropriated funds (Republic Act No. 10533) for sustainable development and continued development of its Information Communication Technology (ICT) capability (Text2Teach, 2014) for education transformation.

The Philippine government created an initiative compared to its neighboring Asian countries to focus on ensuring that its citizens were competent in speaking English, and most Filipinos speak and comprehend the English language (Plaza, 2018). Further, it was proven by Hernandez (2015) that the Philippines is one of the most popular countries in the world in terms of English proficiency, with 70% of its people having an excellent command of the English language. Also, Philippine educators are considered one of the foreigners' favorites. Chinese prefer Filipino teachers to teach their children in English as their second language compared to other nationalities. The Freeman (2018) commented in its article that Chinese children have gained so much learning from Filipino teachers and found them passionate and professional.

On the contrary, Macasinag (2011) commented that high school graduates of yesteryears having a better command of the English language than the college graduates of today. This deterioration is manifested in several ways incorrect grammar, lack of fluency in the language, poor reading comprehension skills, and poor writing skills among others (p. 1).

This declination is also found in different surveys and assessments conducted by the universities and companies of the country. The problems encountered are poor reading comprehension skills, poor writing, and speaking fluency in English among college graduate students. Nevertheless, the Philippines is extending more efforts to improve the quality of its education, reduce poverty, and conform to the international standard (The Report: Philippines, 2017). Also, the leaders are eager to realize their vision for quality education. This nation should be compared to highly globalized and competitive countries in the world.

Moreover, Crețu (2017), in her study, revealed that pre-service teachers have a lot of different hopes concerning their teaching profession. Therefore, the role of in-service teachers is significant in helping the pre-service teachers to love their profession and help them understand their mission as teachers. Notwithstanding, the continued desire of a teacher to become a role model to his pupils demonstrate a deeper understanding of his mission. Several Filipino teachers have decided to teach in the country despite the struggles they experienced in teaching, for they believed that education is a vocation, and Filipino students, especially those from public schools, deserve Filipino talents (Pagulong, 2017). Truly, the Philippines needs educators who are committed to their chosen profession, educators who diligently do their assigned tasks with or without supervision, and most especially, this country needs educators whose life in teaching is worthy of being emulated.

On the other hand, maintaining quality education in the Philippines remains unstable and problematic. It is proven with some studies conducted such as the

educational system of the Philippines (Durban & Catalan, 2012; Plaza, 2018), the teaching and learning process of Solheim (2017) and Nemenzo (2018), classroom strategies of teachers (Freiberg et al., 1995), teacher burnout (Juszczak, 2014), and workload (Torres, 2014). Thus, to address the needs for quality education, more researches are conducted by education experts.

Most research conducted on education in the Philippines uses quantitative designs (Cabrera, 2015; Samer, 2016) while only a few qualitative studies (Wa-Mbaleka, 2017). Hence, more studies on qualitative design, especially using frameworks that understand the voices of marginalized people, should be conducted to find solutions to the challenges encountered continually. Specifically, this study is aimed at uncovering the reality of education in the Philippines by examining the following research questions: (a) What are the views of teachers on the Philippine education system? (b) What were the lived experiences of teachers in school? (c) What were the aspirations of teachers for quality education?

### **Methodology**

This section described the research design, the research setting, and the sampling of participants. It also showed the methods for data gathering through photographs (Wang, Tao, & Yi, 1998) and analysis by following the framework of Wallerstein (1987). Ethical considerations and the researcher's flexibility was reflected in this section.

### **Research Design**

This study used a qualitative research design modeled in participatory action research (PAR) based on Freire's pedagogy on critical consciousness, which empowers the ordinary people to become agents of positive change in their communities (Freire, 1970; Rosario, Domocmat, & Oniasville, 2016; Wa-Mbaleka, 2018). This research introduced photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), one of the methods used in PAR in gathering and analyzing data.

Photovoice was first developed by Wang and Burris (1997) to help Chinese village women document their day-to-day health and work realities through photographs (Wang et al., 1998). The photovoice has three main goals: (a) it is designed to make participants reflect and document personal and community issues; (b) it provide an avenue for dialogues on issues raised through photographs discussions and, (c) to reach policymakers for awareness and solutions (Wang et al., 1998; Wang & Burris, 1997).

## **Research Setting**

The research study was conducted in the city of General Santos, located in the south-central part of Mindanao, Philippines (Philippine Information Agency, 2019). This city was previously known as Dadiangás and abbreviated as G.S.C. or GenSan. It is part of South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani Province (SOCCSKSARGEN) region, and geographically located in the province of South Cotabato (General Santos City, n.d.). GenSan is widely known as “Tuna Capital” in the country and a city of divergent cultures such as Muslims, Christians, and Lumads (T’boli and B’laan).

## **Sample**

The participants of this study were all students of the graduate school of Mindanao State University of General Santos City, who took up a Master of Arts in Education major in General Education. They were all public-school teachers with an age range of 20-35 years, who also currently teaching in the different places of South Cotabato, Sarangani Province, and General Santos City.

Out of twenty-five teachers, the researcher selected 10 participants (seven females and three males). Five of them were teachers in the far-flung schools (scarcity of internet connection, especially Wi-Fi signals) of South Cotabato and Sarangani Province. The other five were teachers in General Santos City. Most of them are single and have been teaching for 2 to 5 years already.

## **Data Gathering Procedure**

The information gathered was based on the framework used by Wang and Burris (1997). Before the data were collected, the conceptualization of the research problem was made by the researcher. Then, consent was sought from the participants asking their willingness to participate. Orientations on photovoice and photography training were then scheduled to ensure that the participants understood the goals and objectives of the research. During the training, the participants were instructed to take photos that depict the research questions of the study. Each of them took pictures using their cellphone cameras and encourage them to choose the three best photos that accurately describe their concerns. The data collection was done through Focus Group Interviews (FGI), Key Informant Interviews (KII), presentations, and photovoice exhibit for validation of the data gathering process.

## **Data Analysis**

The data gathered for this study were analyzed and interpreted using themes. Pictures taken by the 10 participants were classified and organized in a picture pattern (Klee, 1940). To come up with one best picture, a proper selection that appropriately describes each research question was done. After choosing one best

picture for each research question, the participants' group the pictures with the same pattern for codification. In codifying and identifying themes from the pictures gathered, deliberation among the participants were also made.

The first theme of photos refers to how the participants view Philippine education. The second theme describes their lived experiences in school. The third theme relates to their aspirations for quality education. After identifying the themes for each research question, each participant discussed the meaning of the pictures they took. They explained and interpreted their photographs using the SHOWed framework (Rosario et al., 2016; Wallerstein, 1987). This framework guides the participants to answer the questions: "What do you see here? What is happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this problem or strength exist? What can we do about this?"

After the photo presentation and interpretation, which was done in focus group sharing, in-depth interviews through face-to-face were also conducted. At this point, the participants became more emotional in sharing their teaching experiences in school and hopes for quality education in the Philippines. There were disappointments heard and even seeing the tears running down their faces have touched the researcher. The dissemination and deliberation of this research study were done. All data collected through photos were exhibited and presented during the culmination program, which was attended by public and private school heads, teachers, and students of General Santos City.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Before the conduct of the study, the researcher informed the participants of the objectives of this study, such as paper presentation and possibly for paper publication in a research journal. The participants were already informed and agreed that both options were being explored. They were assured of being updated or notified online or face-to-face when this study would be completed and published.

### **Researcher's Reflexivity**

As a researcher and an educator of the graduate school program, I often hear negative feedback from our public-school teachers regarding the system of our education. Until now, some questions remain no answer due to several factors like poor implementation of the program, too much politics in the field of education, among others, which greatly affect the Philippine education system. I am a public school teacher who was once a DepEd teacher; I understand the hardship that most of our public school teachers are experiencing today because I was once like them who suffer the same predicament. And aside from being an educator, I am also a Gender and Development (GAD) leader where equal rights among individuals are our primary concern. Therefore, I am so grateful that through photovoice, the voices of our educators, especially those who are teaching in the far-flung places of our



country, would be heard. This study focused on the daily realities of public school teachers, their views, and their dreams to achieve quality education in the Philippines. As a researcher, a mentor, and a leader, I dream that the result of this study would bring realization and education to many individuals, especially those in the higher authorities. I believe that change is possible if one boldly sees the reality of his fears. Let us hear the voices of our public school teachers through photovoice.

## Results

During the photo analyses and interpretation sections of this research study, the participants identified five themes to answer the three problem statements. For Research Question 1, which refers to teachers' views on the Philippine education system, the themes realized are (a) uncertainty and (b) season of change. For Research Question 2, where the lived experiences of teachers in the school are asked, the issues revealed are (a) sweet toil and (b) headway while for Research Question 3, referring to the teachers' aspirations for quality education, the theme came out is the promise.

### Uncertainty



Photo # 1 - Faceless

The participants viewed Philippine education as **uncertain and a season of change**. According to them, this country's education failed to show its own identity; it is faceless for it conceals its own capabilities and valued other concepts and ideologies. One participant said, "Our education is like a mannequin which cannot decide for itself, always shedding its clothes depending on the season of fashion. We love to imitate what is new and popular, like the curriculum we have, we keep on introducing new instructions and methods without prior assessment of its acceptability to the majority" (Par.1). Another participant added and titled her photo, "**The blind**." For her, education is blind to the calls of the native learners and mentors who risks their lives teaching the children in the mountains. "Our teaching situation with no electricity and phone signals is not easy. We are always in last priority in terms of learning facilities.



Photo # 2 - The Blind



Photo # 3 - Obfuscate

In competitions, we are at the bottom.

Sometimes we failed to attend seminars because the information had arrived late. I hope that they will see us soon!" (Par.2). Par.3 also shared his views on Philippine education. He titled his picture for this category as "Obfuscate" because he cannot see the real direction of our education due to curriculum and course mismatch (Par.3- obfuscate). "I observed that in the field, not all teachers are teaching based on the specialized courses they learned; some are forced to teach the subject due to the scarcity

of qualified teachers. I also observed that senior high schools, which is run by DepEd, are catering TESDA subjects that are previously under CHED. Therefore, some teachers are struggling, for they lack knowledge and expertise in handling the subjects.”



Par. 8 raised her hand. She said, “For me, our education is slowly dying . . . dying because most of the teachers do not have the freedom to decide on their own. Today in DepEd, we cannot fail the students; we have to promote them to the next level. Even they performed poorly in their academic performance; all educational burdens are on the shoulders of the teachers, so frustrating!” (Par.8-Dying).

The different perspectives of the participants are aligned with the global situations of our education. Too much politics in the field of education, such as employing too much autocracy, favoritism, nepotism, and the like, can hamper the development of school goals and objectives. It is stated that the political approach is part of the educational system (Easton, n.d) In Asia, throughout the ages and across the countries, education served as a political tool to define national identity and had caused the political rationale of regimes. Hence, it is believed that the quality of education largely depends on the quality of its political system (Lall & Vickers, 2008). This system refers to administrative and personal interests, cultural mentality, political corruption, and abusive use of power (Cabrera, 2015).

### Season of Change



Participants also viewed Philippine education as a **season of change**. (Par.5) said that despite criticisms, Philippine education still outlasts and continue to produce quality and productive students. “As a public school teacher, I have heard lots of criticisms against our educational system, which add my burdens in teaching. But as what Ms. Catriona Gray was saying, I look at the silver lining . . . that above this discouraging situation, like the palm tree, bountiful fruits are beside the barren.”



However, Par.6 sadly expressed the meaning of his photo “dancing lady flower;” he said, “our education has no strong foundation of principles. It is easily influenced by the ideologies of others like the dancing lady flower; it sways to the left and sways to the right. . . . Our education goes wherever the wind blows.” Meanwhile, other participants said that education is a cycle. It gets tougher as it gets better. “I learned that what our elders learned before is also be the same education gained by us today only with upgraded

technology. Let us not be tired of learning new skills for us to become a good contribution to others.”

Certainly, the Philippine educational system needs to have a responsive curriculum, a curriculum that suits the need of its people; acknowledge the role of education in the national development emphasizing free from too much politicism; and actively embrace globalization of education (Durban & Catalan, 2012) but with contextualization. As John Dewey once said, “Education is not a preparation for life, but education is life itself” (as cited in Zulueta & Maglaya, 2012, p. 100).

### Sweet Toil



Photo # 8- Weeds

In describing the lived experiences of public school teachers in school, the themes identified referring to their stories are **sweet toil and headway**. Sweet toil, in the sense that despite so many challenges they encountered in teaching, they still can do their responsibilities in school. They don't mind the weeds that keep on pushing them down . . . instead, they continue to illuminate and bloom (Par.1 titled photo # 8 “weeds.”) He described that in the field, not all people are

kind. The physical environment is sometimes unfriendly; sometimes, instructions and policies are tedious to follow. “As a teacher, I have no choice but to do my responsibilities and duties in school; otherwise, like weeds, I become unwanted, which I do not like to happen in my life” (Par.1-Photo#8-weeds). Par.2 added that in DepEd today, teachers are bombarded with so much papers work aside from teaching. “This profession demands our time, our efforts, and sometimes, money. It sometimes makes us sick and destroys our relationships with others. But accepting these challenges wholeheartedly, like the flower summer beauty, I believe,



Photo # 9 - Illuminate

despite the struggling environment, I would still manage to bloom and become a wonderful creation in the summer noon” (Par.2- Photo# 10 - summer beauty). Meanwhile, Par.3 pointed out his picture entitled Illuminate. He said, “as a teacher, my purpose on earth is to bring light to my students so they would see and realize their potentials. Life in teaching is tiring yet fulfilling.” Paper works and other educational

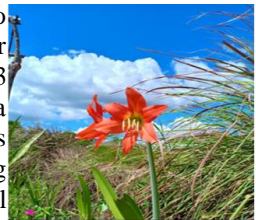


Photo # 10 - Summer Beauty



Photo # 11- The Battle

problems may bury my principles, but seeing the smiles of my students who learned to read and write because of me, I can compare to my life to a light that will never be overcome by darkness” (Par.3-Illuminate).

### Headway

Another theme that emerged under the lived experiences of teachers in school is **headway**. It focused on how public school teachers faced the day to day challenges in school. For them, the school is like a **battle and survival**. “I described my teaching experiences as an everyday waking battle, I may triumph, or I may be defeated. As a teacher, we are on call seven days a week, and 24 hours a day, it is hard! But seeing the success and improvements of our learners because of us, no one can describe the feeling of our joy and pride except us” (P4- Photo#11-The battle). Another participant described her experiences emotionally. She said, “My teaching life is like a tree planted above the rock that no matter how hard the soil it is planted, how salty the water it drinks, and how the wind beat it, I always find a way to smile and grow in full bloom” (Par.7- Photo.#12-Survival). Participants said, “Teaching in remote areas is not easy. We traveled an hour every day to reach the school (P4 Photo#11-The Battle) complying with paper works ASAP with unaccommodating heads. . . these types of environments almost consumed our blood (Par.1-Photo#8-weeds). But seeing our students learned, like the tree planted above the rock, we learned to survive” Par.7- Photo.#12-Survival).



Photo # 12 - Survival

The experiences of teachers in schools generally described that the majority of them experienced burnout. Pressures and discouragement are felt due to their negative environment. People who work in this profession are mostly threatened with burnout syndrome Juszczak (2014) and “teachers may be more or less effective” (p. 8) depending on the quality of its working environment (Jackson, 2014; Ye, 2016) and unsustainable workload is the other reason why teachers leave the school (Torres, 2014).

### The Promise



Photo # 13 - Journey

The theme that emerged on the aspirations of the participants for quality education is “**The Promise.**” The 10 participants expressed that they wanted to leave a legacy and to serve as a light for a better future for all generations. Photos such as journey and imprint are some examples of the legacy that public school teachers wanted to share with the people, particularly to their students. Par. 4, photo entitled with us during the interview that continuous process and eternal explained, “For me to become a teacher, despite all the challenge not stop learning and must not stop



Photo # 14 - Imprint

to share with the particularly to their who pointed out the “Journey,” is sharing education is a journey. She better and effective encountered, I should fulfilling the dreams

of my students.” Par.6 agreed to what Par. 4 had stated; she also said that she wanted to become an inspiration to her students. “No matter how hard life is, I will always see the good side of life with perseverance to finish my postgraduate degree to share new knowledge to my students continually and to inspire them to aim high in learning.”

Finally, photos such as **light**, **voyage**, **nexus**, and **in time** showed that the teachers are hopeful for students’ brighter future. To continually giving them quality education despite the challenges they encountered is a promise. “I see Philippine education as forever developing, changing, growing and alive,” Par. 7 stated while holding a photo entitled “light.” Another participant shared her aspiration for education. She said, “For me, Philippine education is a never-ending voyage. Sometimes we struggle because of storms but hopeful because, after the storm, calm water will come” (P8-voyage). “Let us pray for a safe journey,” she added.



Photo # 15 - Light



Photo # 16 - Voyage

Meanwhile, one male participant described his picture as a “nexus.” He said that the lenses of the eyeglasses signify the aspirations of every teacher. “I want to see my students as globally competitive and fully developed individuals. At least I have contributed something to them even if they tend to forget my name.” “I agree to what you have said,” Par. 9 responded, pointing to the last picture with a title “in time,” “Like the asparagus plant in the picture, fighting for its life under the heat of the sun, we should continue moving despite our imperfections and the imperfections of our environment. Also, “teaching must be our passion . . . For once the rain falls, we will grow fast, and we become unstoppable” Participant 10 added.



Photo # 17 - Nexus

The result is parallel to the study of Cretu (2017) that teacher candidates have a lot of different hopes concerning their teaching profession. They desired to become role models for pupils and demonstrate their proper understanding of the teacher’s mission. Despite the hardships that Filipino teachers are experiencing, still, they have hearts to teach in the country, for they believe that education is a vocation and Filipino students, especially those from public schools, deserve Filipino talents (Pagulong, 2017).

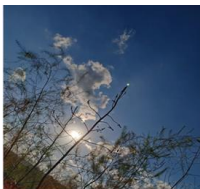


Photo # 18 - In Time

### Conclusion

Through participatory action research and photovoice, some insights and realities are revealed. This phenomenon will provide policymakers and other stakeholders a deeper understanding of the current situation of Philippine education.

The public-school teachers viewed Philippine education as **obfuscate and faceless**. The vision of having a quality education is uncertain, for its ideologies are not tied to a solid foundation. Thus, the powers of others in debt its existence. Like a mannequin, its beauty only lasts for a season, which ultimately, in searching for better quality education, imitation becomes a natural phenomenon.

Nevertheless, this reality never stops the teachers from becoming resilient. Like a soldier who runs for his life, their teaching experiences have molded them to become triumphant, no matter how many times they stumble. Though teaching experiences for them are daily battle and survival, seeing their students learned because they accepted the challenge, for them, teaching becomes a sweet toil. They learned to believe that relationships will only be meaningful; the unfriendly environment will be understandable if one learns to welcome the weeds in a circle. Moreover, teachers have promised to leave a legacy and serve as a light to share a positive future for all generations continually. They wanted to imprint ethical values and strived to share the best quality of education to children despite all imperfections in the field of education.

The current realities of Philippine education are concerns, which should not be ignored. Disruption in the educational system will affect mostly our Filipino citizens. Thus, school administrators, educators, community, government officials, researchers, and policymakers should reflect their functions as stakeholders. They should utilize their capabilities and authorities by realigning and designing programs and educational policies appropriate to both local and global standards. The researcher is highly recommending and appreciating more studies on photovoice as a research method to empower marginalized people to express their voices for personal and social change.

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